

WALL STREET JOURNAL
13 January 1986ARTICLE APPEARED
ON PAGE 29

Quad... That Is, Gadd... or Khjad... Forget It; We'll Call Him Colonel

By VALIDA SELLERS

Staff Reporter of THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

If a certain Libyan colonel's name wasn't already a household word in America, President Reagan certainly made it so last week. In his nationally televised news conference, Mr. Reagan characterized Libya's strong man as "a pariah," "a barbarian" and "flaky."

But how is his name spelled? Time magazine spells it "Gaddafi." The New York Times and the Washington Post spell it "Qaddafi." The Wall Street Journal spells it "Qadhafi." The Chicago Tribune, Philadelphia Inquirer and USA Today spell it "Khadafi."

The colonel's name is an Arabic name, so the confusion comes in translating it to English. Thus the spelling is purely phonetic, and that leaves room for discretion.

The CIA's Version

An editor on the foreign desk of this newspaper sticks up for "Qadhafi." He contends it's "the official U.S. government spelling" because it's the version used in a Central Intelligence Agency directory.

A spokesman from the New York Times foreign staff admits that, with so many variations, a reader can get stumped. "But you can usually get it if you say it out loud just like it's spelled—however that is."

But if that's true, would the correct pronunciation be GAH-DAH-FEE, as in the oral rendering of Time's spelling? A spokesman for the magazine's foreign staff

doesn't consider the matter open to question. "Gaddafi! That's our style," she says. "It's as simple as that."

The Chicago Tribune, which spells it "Khadafi," defends its version as the style of the Associated Press. A Tribune foreign editor acknowledges that spellings beginning with "Q" are probably truer to Arabic phonetically. "But Khadafi looks so funny when it's spelled Qaddafi because we aren't used to seeing 'q' without 'u,'" she says.

AP's Defense

Ed Butler, the AP's deputy foreign editor, has no qualms about disagreeing with the New York Times and others. "We use a Kh-sound. It's more to our liking," he says. "It all depends on which Arabic dialect you translate from."

A Philadelphia Inquirer foreign editor says the "correct" spelling of Khadafi is "no burning concern" since there are so many. "If there were only one or two, I would wonder more about which we should use," he says, "but I think we're okay as long as we make it clear who we're talking about."

In all, there are believed to be about 20 English spellings of the Libyan leader's last name. But even news publications that spell the last name the same way offer different versions of the first name. At least those are fewer. Usually it's "Muammar" or "Moammar" or "Muammar el." Take your pick.